



50 Valley Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02909  
(401) 444-0600 | www.unitedwayri.org



March 13, 2024  
The Honorable Joseph M. McNamara Chair,  
House Education Committee  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 7724, An Act Relating to Education — Offenses Pertaining to Schools**

United Way of Rhode Island is writing to express its support for **House Bill 7724, Act Relating to Education Offenses Pertaining to Schools**. A priority of United Way of Rhode Island is to help children succeed in school through the support of high-quality education programs in early childhood, elementary, middle, secondary school and out-of-school time programs.

Historically, curriculum and literature in classrooms have not reflected the diversity in teacher and student population. Our local schools must provide youth with a safe environment that affirms diversity in race, ethnicity and cultural practice. To maintain this inclusive environment, youth must have access to ethnic curriculum that explores diverse literature in efforts to promote community values and reinforces social justice initiatives. Comprehensive diverse instruction and curriculum also provide all youth with strong social emotional learning opportunities through consistent engagement with diverse comprehensive learning materials and diversity in rich conversations with peers and educators.

To best support healthy learning environments and improved educational outcomes for youth, students must be able to make healthy connections to their teachers and learning. According to the latest Rhode Island Kids Count policy brief, Racial and Ethnic Disparities in K-16 Education in Rhode Island, our state lacks diversity among current public educators and poorly reflects the demographics of the public student population. ( KidsCount, 2023). Often, BIPOC, Latinx, and Southeast Asian students struggle to find representation among their educator population due to a lack of diversity and cultural representation. (KidsCount, 2023). Without student connectivity to culturally responsive curriculum and diverse educators, youth will be deprived of a comprehensive education that values diversity in thought, lived experiences, and cultural representation. Our schools must address the shortage in diverse educators, provide comprehensive educational support to students and allow them to explore diverse topics, cultures, and lived experiences.

United Way of Rhode Island respectfully asks that the committee support this bill and consider the recommendations to maintain high standards for social justice and diversity in curriculum and continue to work to create a more equitable school system for Rhode Island students and their educators.

**Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.**





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Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cortney Nicolato".

Cortney Nicolato  
President and CEO

Uniting our community and resources to build racial equity and opportunities for all Rhode Islanders.

